

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUKAVU 00082 081344Z
ACTION SIG-03

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R 081233Z SEP 78
FM AMCONSUL BUKAVU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0498
INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ASIG, CG
SUBJECT: INSPECTION: POST MEMORANDUM

1. THE AMERICAN CONSULATE AT BUKAVU WAS REOPENED IN 1969 TWO YEARS AFTER THE POST WAS EVACUATED DURING A MERCENARY-LED REBELLION. THE POST NOW CONSISTS OF A PRINCIPAL OFFICER, AN ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST/VICE CONSUL, A PIT AMERICAN SECRETARY, AND ONE FSL. THE USICA CULTURAL CENTER (IN THE SAME BUILDING) WAS OFFICIALLY CLOSED IN 1978 BUT THE CONSULATE KEEPS THE LIBRARY OPEN.

2. THE POST'S PRIMARY FUNCTION HAS BEEN AS THE EMBASSY'S EYES AND EARS IN EASTERN ZAIRE. SINCE POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING IS CENTRALIZED IN KINSHASA AND SINCE THE SECURITY/MILITARY SITUATION HAS BEEN RELATIVELY CALM IN RECENT YEARS, THE POST'S REPORTING HAS CONSISTED MOSTLY OF BACKGROUND REPORTS ON ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND ON POLITICAL ATTITUDES, WITH SPOT REPORTS INCLUDING COFFEE, MINING, REFUGEES, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GOZ REFORM PROGRAM.

3. THE CONSULATE PROVIDES CONSULAR SERVICES FOR THE 250
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PAGE 02 BUKAVU 00082 081344Z

AMERICAN CITIZENS SCATTERED THROUGHOUT BUKAVU'S LARGE, REMOTE, AND DENSELY POPULATED CONSULAR DISTRICT. THE POST COOPERATES WITH THE PEACE CORPS TRAINING CENTER IN BUKAVU AND WITH THE EXPANDING AID PRESENCE HERE. COMMERCIAL WORK IS NEGLIGIBLE.

4. THE MAJOR PROBLEM HINDERING THE POST IS INADEQUATE

COMMUNICATIONS. THE CONSULATE DOES NOT HAVE TELEGRAPHIC FACILITIES AND THE ONLY RAPID FORM OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY IS VOICE RADIO. THERE ARE NO ROADS TO THE CAPITAL AND COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE IS UNDEPENDABLE. CLASSIFIED POUCHES ARE CARRIED TO AND FROM THE POST BY NON-PRO COURIER WHEN CONVENIENT, AND UNCLASSIFIED POUCHES USUALLY TAKE SEVERAL WEEKS FROM THE EMBASSY. AN INTERMITTENT PROBLEM IS TRANSPORT. FREQUENT TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE CONSULAR DISTRICT IS NECESSARY IF THE POST IS TO PROVIDE THE REPORTING EXPECTED OF IT, BUT FOR THE PAST FIVE MONTHS NONE OF THE POST'S VEHICLES HAS BEEN IN CONDITION TO PERMIT SUCH TRAVEL. NEW VEHICLES HAS BEEN IN CONDITION TO PERMIT SUCH TRAVEL. NEW VEHICLES ARE ON ORDER AND ONE SHOULD ARRIVE BEFORE THE INSPECTORS VISIT, THUS RESOLVING THAT PROBLEM, BUT PERIODIC GASOLINE SHORTAGES CONTINUE TO PLAGUE THE REGION. BECAUSE OF THE INACCESSIBILITY OF KINSHASA THIS POST FREQUENTLY RECEIVES ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT FROM AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA, LOCATED THREE HOURS AWAY BY PAVED ROAD.

5. IN RECENT YEARS THE RETENTION OF THE CONSULATE HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF CONTINUAL DEBATE. FOR MY VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT PLEASE SEE MY MEMO OF APRIL 6 THIS YEAR TO THE AMBASSADOR, COPY TO BILL SWING AF/C. WE URGE THE INSPECTORS TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE FULLY WITH AF/C AND WITH THE EMBASSY. THE FEASIBILITY OF IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT IS A MAJOR FACTOR TO BE CONSIDERED IN DISCUSSING THE POST'S FUTURE; LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 BUKAVU 00082 081344Z

THE VICE CONSUL AND I AGREE THAT THE POST IS WORTH KEEPING ON THE CONDITION THAT ITS COMMUNICATIONS FACILITIES BE IMPROVED. WE WILL ALSO WANT TO DISCUSS THE POSSIBILITY OF REESTABLISHING FUNDING FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITIES. BUKAVU IS THE UNIVERSITY AND INTELLECTUAL CENTER OF NORTH-EASTERN ZAIRE AND THERE IS MUCH DEMAND FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE U.S.; OUR INABILITY TO PROVIDE BETTER RESPONSE TO THESE INQUIRIES IS EMBARRASSING.

6. SINCE HOTEL FACILITIES ARE INADEQUATE IN BUKAVU OFFICIAL VISITORS ORDINARILY ARE HOUSED WITH THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER AND/OR VICE CONSUL. WE EXTEND THIS INVITATION TO THE INSPECTORS. BOWEN

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